

Michael L. Kent, Ph.D.

Communication Studies

SPCM 250: Intercultural Communication

M/W 1–2:15 p.m. | Location 051 Life Hall

Office Location: Life Hall 231C

Office Hours: M, Th. 12–12:30 p.m. | W 12–12:30 p.m., 7:30–8:15 p.m. | & by appointment

Telephone: (973) 655–5130

E-mail: KentM@Mail.Montclair.Edu

Web site: <http://www.Montclair.Edu/Pages/CommStudies/Kent/Index.htm>

Course Description: Intercultural Communication will explore issues such as language, tradition, income, geography, gender, power, and social class, and how they influence communication. Intercultural communication will provide you with the skills necessary to evaluate other cultures, as well as, teach you to be more critical of your own culture and how it influences your intercultural interactions.

Objectives

- To learn about the basic beliefs and values of a variety of cultures.
- To understand the barriers involved in effective cross-cultural communication.
- To understand how ethnocentrism often plays a role in cultural conflict and misunderstandings.
- To learn specific skills useful to facilitating intercultural communication.

Academic Dishonesty: The University is an academic community of scholars. Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense against the integrity of this community and will not be tolerated. All academic work submitted by you is assumed to be your own original work and to contain your own thought, research, and self-expression. Work that borrows the ideas, organization, or wording, from others must be properly acknowledged. Similarly, work that was conducted for another class should not be passed off as original.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or inappropriate use of the words or ideas of others. Plagiarism occurs when written or spoken material is borrowed (even from oneself), in whole or in part, and passed off as original by a writer or speaker. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, presenting someone else's ideas, speech, presentation, essay, book review, or news release as original. It also includes failing to document or cite the source of word-for-word or paraphrased material in oral presentations or written assignments.

It is my policy to pursue plagiarism vigorously, to fail students who plagiarize for the entire class, and to report cases of plagiarism to the university administration.

- Please come to class prepared to participate and contribute to class.
- Please submit all work in a professional “final-draft-looking” form.
- **NB:** “draft,” dot matrix, hand-written, or typewriter documents will not be accepted.
- Late assignments will be discounted 10% per calendar day.

The Department of Communication's attendance policy: students may miss the equivalent of one week of classes without penalty. If three classes are missed (on a two day a week schedule), your final grade will be reduced by 5%; if four classes are missed, your final grade will be reduced by 10%. Missing more than two weeks worth of classes will result in a failing grade for the course. Illnesses (your own or others) will not affect this policy so do not waste your absences.

For “perfect” attendance: (including being on time for each class) you will gain an additional 3% on your final grade. No exceptions to bonus will be made for any reason.

Texts/Readings (Required)

- Samovar, L. A., and Porter, R. E. (2001). *Communication Between Cultures* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Hofstede, G. (1997). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Other readings: as provided.

Assignments	Points
Professionalism —participation, preparedness, quality of materials, etc.	300
Article/Chapter Presentation (8–10 minutes with 2 pp. of handouts)	100
Culture Case Study (5–7 pp.)	300
Culture Presentations (10–15 minutes w/ food, music, VAs, etc.)	400
Culture Interviews (5–7 pp.)	500
Exams (2 @ 300 points)	600
Total	2,200

Course Schedule (readings due on date listed)

Week 1:	9.4	Overview of Class Assign Introductory Exercise Discuss Readings
Week 2:	9.9	Select presentation readings Introductions
	9.11	Read: Samovar & Porter, chapters 1 & 2
Week 3:	9.16	Read: Reedy article (be able to explain “major”/“minor” frameworks)
	9.18	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 4:	9.23	Read: Hofstede (pp. ix–xv, 3–19, 23–29, 36–48, 49–55, 66–78, 79–87, 96–117, 122–138, 159–174)
	9.25	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 5:	9.30	Read: Samovar & Porter, chapters 3 & 4
	10.2	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 6:	10.7	Read: Samovar & Porter, chapters 5 & 6
	10.9	Article/Chapter Presentation Culture Case Studies Due
Week 7:	10.14	Exam I Study Guide & Review
	10.16	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 8:	10.21	Exam I
	10.23	No Class—University Day
Week 9:	10.28	Article/Chapter Presentation
	10.30	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 10:	11.4	Article/Chapter Presentation
	11.6	Article/Chapter Presentation
Week 11:	11.11	TBA
	11.13	Culture Presentations w/ handouts
Week 12:	11.18	Culture Presentations w/ handouts
	11.20	Culture Presentations w/ handouts
Week 13:	11.25	Exam II Distributed Culture Presentations w/ handouts
	11.27	No Class—National Communication Association Conference
Week 14:	12.2	Culture Presentations w/ handouts
	12.4	Culture Presentations w/ handouts
Week 15:	12.9	Evaluations Cultural Interviews Essay Due (no extensions)
	12.11	Exam II Due
Finals	TBA	Class Wrap-up

Note: College level writing standards are expected on all work submitted (this includes correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, careful proofreading, etc.). No spelling errors are allowed—having even one spelling error will result in a zero for the assignment in question. All assignments should be double-spaced (with 25–27 lines-per-page), have one-inch margins (1”) all around, and be written in one of the following fonts: **Bookman** or **Bookman Old Style 11pt.**, **New Century Schoolbook 11 pt.**, **Garamond 12 pt.**, or **Bernhard Modern 12 pt.** (see me for other options). For headings, use **boldface type, Arial Black, or Helvetica Black.**

Culture Case Study

Due: October 9

Length: 3–5 single-spaced pages (turn in two copies—one single spaced and formatted as a “memo,” another double-spaced for me to edit).

Requirements: Memo form; final draft quality; include a bibliography of at least three sources “consulted” at the end. Do not include dictionaries, encyclopedia, the Internet/World Wide Web, or magazines and newspapers in this list.

NB: although you may mention the source of information in your memo, memos do not typically include citations. The “bibliography” is for me, not your “boss.”

The “Culture Case Study” assignment should be a lot of fun. In the process of learning about another culture you also learn how that knowledge translates into actual communication practice—a link that the textbook never really makes very well.

Culture Case Study (must be a different than your cultural interview): The Culture Case Study will be a document 5–7 pages in length and written in memo form (see handout). For this assignment you will examine three aspects of an assigned nations culture: (1) features of the country itself such as geography, climate, location, transportation issues, racial/ethnic/religious tensions, significant social/political issues, major imports/exports, and areas of special cultural pride. (2) Communication issues (from Hofstede) including power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, Confucian dynamism, and high/low context. And (3), issues associated with business etiquette such as how to behave upon first meeting others from that culture (handshake, kiss, bow, wai, etc.), what the topic of conversation should be in the first meeting, the role played by alcohol in the culture (if any), food (strange, spicy, unpleasant, who should pay, etc.), tipping (how much and is it expected), gift giving, the importance of marital status and family, social status (age, gender, etc.), chronemics (perception of time), and proxemics (issues of personal and social space), the exchange rate (how much of their money = \$1 U.S.), social faux pas—what you should never do or say, etc. Finally, be sure to highlight any issues specifically related to the relationship of the participants involved in the meetings (status, age, sex, education, etc.). Complete sentences are expected when introducing each section and explaining cultural issues, however, bulleted lists are also acceptable—and expected.

Before you can answer any communication related questions about the culture you have been assigned, you will need to learn as much as you can about that culture. A book on international travel specifically written for your country is ideal (I have a few of these in my office), as is a basic history text on that culture. Consult 1–2 scholarly texts/articles that relate specifically to your culture. A good place to start your research is with a visit to your country’s “tourism Web site” if such a place exists, as well as a visit to the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Web site, and any sites dealing with your countries culture, politics, religion, etc.

The Culture Case Study, assumes the following scenario:

You work in a medium organization that wants to break into the lucrative international market in (your country). A potential (your country) client has asked your company to send over an expert to make a proposal. The potential client is a family owned business and is considered quite powerful in their home country. Create a cultural summary to help your boss prepare for the trip to (your country). Your boss, a 44 year-old woman, will meet with top executives of the organization. She has appointments scheduled with a senior male manager (age 58), a junior female manager (a daughter of the owner who is in her early 30s), and a Ph.D. (who’s age is not known but is considered very influential in the family). As your boss prepares for the presentation and what your organization can do for the client, what types of culture specific communication information will you provide him/her that will help win the client?

Cultural Interviews
(Cannot be the same culture as your case study)

Due: December 9.

Length: 5–7 pp. double-spaced (submit interview tapes with your essay—cassette not micro).

Requirements:

- Essay form
- APA style for essay, references, interviews, etc.
- An annotated bibliography. An annotated bibliography provides a brief (one paragraph) description of the text and how/why the text is useful. This is not the same as the abstract.
- Interview at least 4–6 individuals from a culture other than your own.
- “Interview” and meet with a “confidant” several times—this counts as **one** interviewee.
- Consult at least 3–5 “academic” sources (beyond the class texts) and include references in your essay to them. “Academic sources” include scholarly books, journal articles, interviews with academic/business professionals, etc. Also, consult several (4–6) “Nonacademic” sources: magazines, newspapers, the Internet and World Wide Web, television shows, encyclopedia, dictionaries, etc.
- Final draft quality.

The “Cultural Interviews” and the “Culture Presentations” assignments are perhaps the highlight of the semester. Here you will conduct your own interviews on a culture that interests you. You will also conduct actual “research” on the culture selected in the form of articles/books consulted.

For the Cultural Interviews assignment you have a bit more flexibility in choosing your “culture.” That is, you do not have to select a country or a “dominant culture” but may instead select a co-culture or a “subculture.”

For the Cultural Interviews assignment you will need to find locate three to five (4–6) individuals from a culture other than your own to interview and one “confidant” from that culture who is willing to meet with you several times (not less than three) to explain/clarify issues. **NB:** because the culture must be different, if you are a “Chinese American,” you cannot use Chinese culture—see me to discuss unique situations.

As suggested above, a good place to start your research is with a visit to your culture/country’s “Web site” if such a place exists, a visit to the CDC’s Web site (if appropriate), and visits to any sites dealing with your culture/countries traditions, politics, religion, etc.

Also, as suggested above, before you can answer any communication-related questions about the culture you have selected, you will need to learn as much as you can about that culture. Books on international travel and basic history texts on your culture are recommended. You should also consult scholarly texts/articles that relate specifically to your culture.

The Cultural Interviews assignment is exploratory and intended as a starting point for you to learn some detailed information about a culture that interests you. Because the focus of the class is on “communication,” you should focus on the following issues from Hofstede that bear directly on the process of effective communication: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, high and low context, Confucian dynamism, as well as the following issues: respect for ancestors, perceptions of time, proxemics, class, gender, perceptions of other cultures, religion, and cosmology. A brief (one page or less) description of the country’s history, geography, etc. might be included if it will help clarify issues discussed.

Culture Presentation**(Cultures may be the same as either the case study or interview assignment)****Start:** November 13**Length:** 10–15 minutes**Requirements:**

- Be able to set-up and take-down your presentation quickly (under 5 min. total). You may want to get a friend to help you with this.
- Bring samples of food, music, clothing, art, etc. (for clothing and art, pictures will do if you cannot get originals but actual pictures/objects are preferred). You can easily get high quality pictures from the Internet. Be sure that they are printed in color, on high quality, and are large enough to be seen by everyone.
- Prepare a one-page handout with highlights of the culture examined: communication issues, traditions, accomplishments, important laws, etc. The handout must be “professional looking” (see me for assistance) and “useful” for the audience—i.e., not just a collection of “random quotes.”
- Create several “professional looking” visual aides that illustrate the culture’s beliefs, values, etc., as well as clarify communication-related issues.

The “Culture Presentations” assignment should be a lot of fun. Most of the presentation should be “visual/interactive” rather than “spoken.” That is, you should prepare a 5–7 minute presentation in which you highlight several main points and communication related issues. The remaining 5–7 minutes should be set-aside for the audience to ask questions, view your cultural artifacts, taste some food, listen to music samples, etc.

Culture Presentations: The purpose of the presentation is for you to expose your fellow students to the diversity and features of another culture, and for you to develop an appreciation for a culture other than your own. In the presentation you will be expected to provide samples of food, music, clothing, art, and also, to create several visual aides/handouts, and explain an assortment of culture specific issues such as geographic location, cultural dynamics, interpersonal/nonverbal issues of significance, etc.

NB: Be prepared to deliver your presentation twice, both as part of the class and as part of the “Communication Day” activities for high school students.

Article/Chapter Presentations

Due: (varies) _____

Length: 10–15 minutes

Requirements:

Create a 1–2 page, typed, handout that does the following:

- Has your name on the handout
- Properly cites the reading at the top of the page
- Is free of spelling and grammar errors
- Briefly summarizes the main points/claims of the chapter
- Conforms to the requirements for written work found in the syllabi
- Includes three discussion questions from the chapter/article and brief answers.
- Use complete sentences, quotes, and references to the text.
- Make enough copies for yourself and everyone else in the class (including me).

Briefly summarize the chapter (about five minutes) and then discuss relevant issues. Do not spend more than five minutes summarizing the text. Be prepared to lead a class discussion about your reading by preparing 3 discussion questions related to the reading and a discussion/summary of the text.

Practice your presentation so that you are well prepared and make your parents proud!

Exams will cover material from course readings and from class lecture/presentations. Exam I will be essay format. Exam II will be a (typed) take-home exam also covering material from the text, lectures, and presentations.

If you use letterhead, *your* contact information will not appear below. Include information that is not in the letterhead (e-mail, telephone extension, etc.), under your name and title at the bottom of the letter.

Letterhead Here

Monday, September 2, 2002

Michael Kent, Graduate Director

Communication Studies
Montclair State University
050 Life Hall

Upper Montclair NJ 07043

Telephone: (973) 655-5130

E-mail: KentM@Mail.Montclair.Edu

(Optional placement)

Michael Kent, Graduate Director

Speech Communication
Montclair State University
050 Life Hall

Upper Montclair NJ 07043

Telephone (973) 655-5130

E-mail: KentM@Mail.Montclair.Edu

Jane/John Q. Public, Student

Communication Avenue
Upper Montclair NJ 07043

Dear Ms/Mr. Public,

This letter is intended to discuss the characteristics of a business letter. I cover both formatting and content issues here. Use it as a model. Keep your letters shorter than this one.

It is appropriate to have all text in your business letter left justified. You should have a “ragged right” margin (do not justify both margins). You *may* hyphenate the document. You should also single space *everything* (except for documents you hand in to be critiqued, which should have the body-text double-spaced for editing purposes). You may use **bold**, *italic*, underline, and ^{superscript} if appropriate—but use non-roman formatting sparingly. Set all margins at one-inch.

Be sure to use the same font and the same font size throughout the letter. Do not use a font that is smaller than 11-point Helvetica, Garamond, or Times New Roman, or 10-point **Bookman**, Palatino, New York, or New Century Schoolbook. This letter is written in 10-point Bookman Old Style.

Use full-block or modified full-block format. Full-block format is like this letter: no tabs at the beginning of paragraphs and insert an extra space between paragraphs. Modified full block format is like what you were trained to use when writing class essays: insert a half-inch tab at the beginning of all paragraphs and do not insert extra spaces after paragraphs.

Keep all paragraphs short—a few sentences only, such as illustrated here. Limit each paragraph to discussion/elaboration of a single idea. By limiting each paragraph to single ideas, the letter is easier to “scan” for relevant content issues. Try to keep business letters to only a few (two to three) paragraphs. Do not write one-sentence paragraphs.

Keep the entire letter short—never more than 1.5 pages. Busy people do not have time to read a lot of unsolicited information. Also, organize information (such as three story ideas used in a pitch letter) according to order of importance. Very often a busy person will not read the whole letter when it arrives but save it for when it is more relevant. S/he will read the first paragraph (or first few paragraphs) for the general idea, and then scan the rest of the letter for content. They will then save the letter until it is relevant to them—i.e., before a meeting.

In a business letter it is okay to be “somewhat” conversational. However, avoid technojargon, colloquial language, purple prose, clichés, and sounding too academic.

Always proofread! Always spell check! Always fix errors—even minor errors. Never send a letter out with errors that you know about. And never send out a letter with editing marks on it where you corrected your mistakes.

Cordially, (Respectfully, Sincerely, etc. Not: Cheers, Your Humble Servant, etc.)

Michael Kent

Director, Educational Communication

Monday, September 17, 2001

Memo

To: Class Members
From: Michael L. Kent
Re: Memo Writing



Most students have never been asked do any business writing. Indeed, most students never write any “professional” documents until they start writing their résumé’s and cover letters for jobs. This memo will briefly explain the structure, tone, and format of a typical memo. After reading this memo you should have a fairly good idea of both how a memo might look, and how to structure the content of a memo. The first issue to consider here is how a memo should look.

Memos look different than business letters, as this sample document illustrates. Although it is not necessary to put the big “Memo” at the top of a memo, that is often what is done. Also, since memos are “internal” documents, the formal addressing found on business letters is unnecessary. Usually memo headers include the “date,” “To:...” “From:...,” and “Re:...” (regarding) lines. Microsoft Word has an assortment of memo templates. Simply go to: “file,” “new,” and the “memo” tab and select a memo format (or go to “file” and “Project Gallery” depending upon the version of Word you are using). The next issue has to do with tone.

The differences between a memo and a business letter are few, but the tone of a memo may be slightly more conversational than a business letter—although both are written “professionally.” This means that you do not use slang, colloquial language, etc., nor do you use technojargon, contractions, or unnecessary abbreviations. Finally, memos are formatted differently.

Memos are formatted differently than business letters. Memos are single spaced documents and follow most of the rules for how to structure business letters—see the handout on writing business letters for more information. Major differences include:

- (1) Memos often include numbered or bulleted lists.
- (2) Memos are not signed; instead, initial a memo next to your name at the top.
- (3) Memos are often not edited by others. With many memos you often do not have the luxury of a proofread by a colleague, thus, you must proofread and edit them carefully yourself.

For class assignments, you should do the following:

- When you turn in your “memo,” include both a “final draft” that looks exactly like the real final draft should look (single spaced, no widows/orphans, etc.), and also include an “editable” draft that is double-spaced so that it can be edited/corrected.
- Have as many people as possible proofread your memo for you.
- Contact me at ex. 5130 with questions, or e-mail me at: KentM@Mail.Montclair.Edu.

Intercultural Campus Events

- Conversations about Culture—Date, Time, and Location TBA
- International Student Association—Date, Time, and Location TBA
- Multicultural Food Festival coming up in October.
- **NB:** Please do not attend these events just to get names or set up appointments. If you want to meet members of the groups then come for the whole meeting and plan to attend at least a few meetings.

Assignment Considerations

The Culture Case Studies and Cultural Interviews assignments cannot be on the same culture. However, for the Culture Presentations you may draw upon one of the two cultures you have examined in depth.

Culture Questions

- What is culture and how is culture defined?
- What is a dominant culture, and what is the dominant culture of the U.S.?
- What is a co-culture, and are some co-cultures of the U.S.?
- What is not culture?

Reedy Article Questions

- What is the Conduit Metaphor?
- What are the “major” and “minor” frameworks?
- What purpose do metaphors serve in language?
- What are “dead metaphors?”
- What is the Toolmakers paradigm?

Second Law of Thermodynamics

It is impossible for any cyclic process to occur whose sole effect is the extraction of heat from a reservoir and the performance of an equivalent amount of work. (Kelvin-Planck, Kittel, & Kromer, 1980)

What that means to communication?

- Things break down
- There is no perpetual motion
- Energy must be expended to create energy
- Communication is an energy must be expended system—communication takes work.

Get Out of Jail Free

This card entitles the bearer to one of the following:

- ❑ Eliminate or reduce a late penalty on one written assignment (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- ❑ Eliminate or reduce a time penalty on one speech/presentation (depending upon the severity of the infraction).
- ❑ Rewrite one assignment (not already A- or above) within one week of it being returned.
- ❑ **Make one “deal” with the instructor.**



Request (be Specific)

This card may not be used to:

- Change the date or time of an exam.
- Take a makeup exam.
- Obtain additional absences.
- Eliminate an attendance penalty.
- Eliminate a late-to/early-from class penalty.
- Receive credit for work done in another class.

This offer is subject to change without notice. Coupons must be redeemed at the time of use. This offer is non-transferable and carries no cash value. This offer does not apply to any other class penalties not explained in this document. Void where prohibited by law.

Name (print)

Signature

Date